

Remain in My Love

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Readings: Phil. 2: 1-4; John 15: 9-17

Father Arlindo, dear sisters and friends, thank you for being with us today. With grateful hearts we rejoice in our loving God for countless graces and gifts, among them all of you. We have been specially blessed by our sisters who have given of themselves so generously in leadership these last years—Mary, Maureen, Carol Jean, Dominica, Vitoria, and Ines—who joins our new council. Sisters, thank you for your profound witness of loving service.

In reflecting on the readings of this liturgy, one sentence of just four words touched my heart, encouraged and challenged me. From the Gospel of John: “Remain in my love.” This call of Jesus seems to be rather simple and straightforward. “As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.”

Praying with these words, I encounter paradox and mystery. The invitation to remain in Christ’s love is beautiful, consoling, reassuring in its faithfulness; particularly now for us who are in some form of transition, embracing a new call. To be loved is an amazing gift, a gratuitous gift; not something anyone of us is worthy of or can earn. It is a human need to know and experience that we are loved, and here we are invited to remain forever in Christ’s love.

In some ways, this call to remain in love can seem somewhat passive—just to be, stay in love. From experience we know that love is anything but passive. Love is demanding and involves enormous risk. It requires decision, a response made in freedom, whether to accept the gift of being loved, to surrender to love, to embrace the demands of love. How frightening this can be! Yet, only love heals and transforms fear.

Being loved is awesome and extremely humbling. When loved, we become dependent and vulnerable—able to be wounded. In real love we are accepted just as we are. However, love does not allow us to stay as we are; there is no room for the status quo. Love is forever new, renewing and calling us to the more, to greatness. It draws us beyond where we are to become the persons God desires and needs us to be.

To remain in love holds the call to be open to being loved in new ways and to loving in new ways. This awareness has become very real for me at this moment in my life. I believe this is true for all of us. God wants to love us in new ways and wants us to love in new ways—ways still to unfold, ways we will need to discover and discern as we experience and respond to suffering and urgent needs in our world.

The readings today describe the dynamic action of love—of how love chooses, transforms one from servant to friend, missions one to bear fruit, calls for laying down of life, and even giving over one’s death in radical discipleship. St. Paul in the letter to the Philippians teaches that remaining in Christ’s love requires us to make our own the attitudes and the way of Christ—the way of humility and kenosis.

Caught up in Christ's love, we encounter mystery, the profound mystery of the Trinity. To remain in Christ's love means ultimately to be identified with this mystery and to enter into the dynamic relationship and action of the Triune God. We come into communion with God who loves, who is loved and who is love itself, and share in fullness of life and joy.

Communion with the Triune God is beyond our comprehension and ability to experience, except in small ways and in unexpected moments. Being in communion, we learn kenosis. The love of the Triune God could not and cannot be contained; it pours forth into the other, into creation, into us. How counterintuitive—communion, fullness of life and joy, only through self-emptying.

Remaining in love and in communion with the Triune God involves participating in this self-emptying love: in loving all humanity and all creation, loving all God loves as God loves. "Love gives everything," and the Triune God impels us into the heart of the world, to give everything, to pour out our love and our lives for the life of the world.

Communion with the Triune God brings us into communion with the world and into loving the world with a self-emptying, sacrificial love that fosters ever greater communion and fullness of life for all.

What an awesome call and experience!
What an enormous responsibility and risk!

Recently I came across the poem "Surrender" by Margaret J. Wheatley. Several lines stay with me and seem particularly meaningful at this time.

*When God's love for the world pierces our armor of fear
it is an awesome experience of calling and accountability.*

*When God's love pierces our armor of fear
it is awesome*

*it is awesome to be pierced by God
to be called to accountability*

*to be called by God's love
for the world.*

As we experience the call of God's love,
may we dare to remain in Love.